



DONNY CATES
NIC KLEIN
MATT WILSON

THOR

prey **STARTS
HERE!**



Since time immemorial,
there has always been
the bird and the serpent.
The sun and its shadow...

The great golden eagle,
Odin Borson...

...and Jormungand, the great
serpent, coiled around the
roots of the World Tree.

Their immortal battle,
stretching as long and
bloody and deep as the
roots of Yggdrasil itself...



A war that Odin knew he would
one day be burdened to pass
to his son and heir, Thor.

And so, to teach this bull-
headed and brash young
prince to be not just a
mighty god, but also a
good man...



...Odin created
a shadow for
him as well.

A humble doctor named Donald
Blake. Tethered to Thor and
to the world of man to teach
the Odinson of mercy and of
the fragility of those the
gods protect...

And in times of
great crisis...



...the good doctor could
raise his mighty cane, and
with but a single crack of
it upon the ground...



...be transformed into
the mighty Thor!



But for every light, a shadow.
The bird, and the serpent...

So, the question
begs, does it not?



When Thor
is here...

...where does
Donald Blake go?



PREY

PART ONE OF SIX



The answer, in a word, is nowhere.

An eternal, unchanging un-place of Odin's making.



While Thor rages above against titans and anti-gods...

Doctor Donald Blake awakens mid-stride in a small town of peace and tranquility.

And though he walks yet with his trusty cane, he feels no pain nor sorrow nor sadness in this beautiful summer land.



Respected, loved and admired wherever he goes, Donald Blake takes his endless daily stroll as a never-setting sun bathes him on a perfect cloudless day.



And when he is summoned back to the world above, the good doctor has no knowledge of the time that has passed.



Of how many days, weeks and sometimes years he has walked.



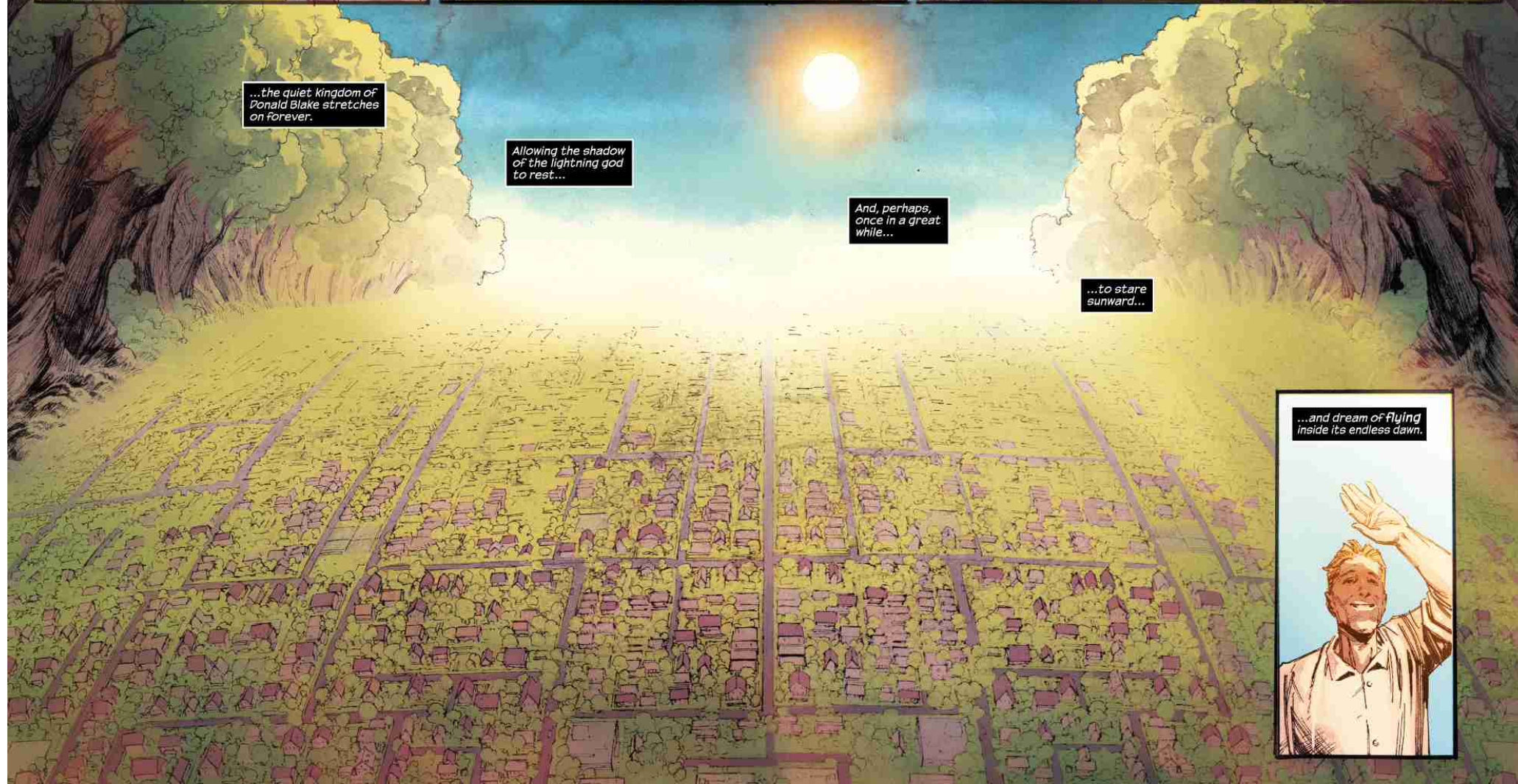
And he
never will.



Because, buried deep
in the bowels of the
World Tree itself...



...guarded and hidden against any
harm by deep and unbreakable
magics forged in the fires of
Odin's own will...



...the quiet kingdom of
Donald Blake stretches
on forever.

Allowing the shadow
of the lightning god
to rest...

And, perhaps,
once in a great
while...

...to stare
sunward...



...and dream of flying
inside its endless dawn.

THOR

“prey” PART ONE OF SIX

THOR IS THE GOD OF THUNDER AND ALL-FATHER
OF ASGARD.

IN HIS RECENT BATTLES — THE MOST SIGNIFICANT
OF WHICH SAW THOR KILL GALACTUS, THE
DEVOURER OF WORLDS, AND INCORPORATE HIS
ANCIENT ARMOR INTO THE ARCHITECTURE OF
ASGARD — THE ALL-FATHER HAS NOTICED A
STRANGE HEAVINESS IN HIS HAMMER, MJOLNIR.

AN EXPERIMENT IN BROXTON, OKLAHOMA, PROVED
THOR’S SUSPICION: WHILE MJOLNIR GROWS HEAVY
FOR THE KING, NO ONE ELSE — WORTHY OR NO —
SEEMS TO HAVE ANY TROUBLE LIFTING THE
HAMMER AT ALL.

THE NEW KING IS STRUGGLING. AND VISITING
ASGARD’S FORMER HOME IN BROXTON HAS LEFT
THOR NOSTALGIC FOR EASIER DAYS...

DONNY CATES
WRITER

NIC KLEIN
ARTIST

MATT WILSON
COLOR ARTIST

VC’S JOE SABINO
LETTERER & DESIGNER

OLIVIER COIPEL & LAURA MARTIN
COVER ARTISTS

NIC KLEIN; GREG HILDEBRANDT;
ED McGUINNESS & LAURA MARTIN;
JENNY FRISON; JEFFREY VEREGGE;
SALVADOR LARROCA & FRANK D’ARMATA
VARIANT COVER ARTISTS

SARAH BRUNSTAD
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

WIL MOSS
EDITOR

C.B. CEBULSKI
EDITOR IN CHIEF

THOR CREATED BY STAN LEE, LARRY LIEBER & JACK KIRBY



THOR, AS A
GOD OF STORIES,
PLEASE, PLEASE
LET ME TELL
YOU...

DONALD BLAKE
AND THE TALE OF
HIS ENDLESSLY PERFECT
SUBURBAN LIFE IS THE
MOST BORING OF
THEM ALL.

IS THERE,
PERHAPS, A
POINT TO
THIS?

THE
POINT
IS...

I'M GOING
TO BRING HIM
BACK.

YOU'RE
WHAT?!

JUST...
JUST FOR A
WEEKEND.

I JUST WANT
TO...TO BE A **STRANGER**
AGAIN! I WANT TO BE AROUND
PEOPLE WHO DO NOT BOW! I
WANT A DAY WITHOUT A SENATE
MEETING CONCERNING THE PSYCHIC
BEARS AND THEIR PREMONITIONS ABOUT
SOME SUPPOSED SLAUGHTER OF THE
OTHER EXILES, OR VOLSTAGG'S
CONSTANT NEED FOR
MORE ALE FOR--

THOR...
LISTEN TO
ME. I HAVE
TO--



I'M LOSING
MY MIND,
BROTHER!

I...I
CANNOT DO
THIS.

I HAVE SO
MUCH ON MY
SHOULDERS NOW,
AND I **WILL NOT RUN**. I
WILL **NOT** LEAVE THESE
PEOPLE. I WILL NOT
LEAVE ASGARD.
BUT...

I JUST...
I NEED A DAY TO
NOT BE KING. TO
FIND MY WAY. SO
THAT I MAY BE A
BETTER ONE.

AND
LOKI, MY
BROTHER...

...I
NEED YOUR
HELP.



AH.

YOU NEED ME TO LIE FOR YOU.



IF YOU NEEDED HELP WITH A STORM, YOU WOULD COME TO ME, NO? I... YES. YES, LOKI. I NEED YOU TO HIDE ME FROM THE EYES OF SIF. I WILL TELL MY KINGDOM I HAVE GONE TO JOTUNHEIM TO CONDUCT--

THOR. SHUT UP. I NEED YOU TO LISTEN TO ME.



THIS IS NOT WHO I AM ANYMORE.

I HAVE RENOUNCED THE TITLE. I AM NO LONGER THE GOD OF LIES. NEVER AGAIN.

I AM THE GOD OF MYTHS, OF STORIES. AND DAMN YOU, I AM TRYING LIKE HELL TO WRITE A NEW AND BETTER ONE FOR MYSELF.

BUT THAT BEING SAID...



I CAN STILL SMELL A LIE ACROSS THE STARS.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN? WHAT LIE HAVE I--

NO, I EXPLAINED--

SAY IT! SAY IT AND I WILL HELP YOU!

LOKI, I DON'T--

JUST SAY IT!

LOKI, YOU TRY MY PATIENCE! I SWEAR TO YOU THAT--

SOMETHING IS WRONG. SOMETHING LARGER.

FINE.





I KNOW WHERE DONALD BLAKE GOES WHEN YOU SWAP, THOR.

BUT I ALSO KNOW WHERE YOU GO WHEN HE IS HERE.



YOU GO TO THE **ELDER-SLEEP**. WHERE YOU CAN COMMUNE WITH THE SPIRITS AND THE OLD DEAD KINGS.

ANYONE CAN PICK UP MJOLNIR. THE ANCIENT ASGARDIAN MAGICS ARE COMING APART AT THE SEAMS. SOMEONE OR SOMETHING... IS DESTROYING DESTINY...

AND YOU WANT ANSWERS.



...YES.



AND IN THE MEANTIME, YOU WANT ME TO BABYSIT YOUR DREADFULLY DULL DOCTOR FRIEND.

...YES.

FINE.

TRULY? YOU MEAN THAT? YOU WOULD DO THIS FOR ME?



YES, THOR. I WANT THESE ANSWERS AS WELL...



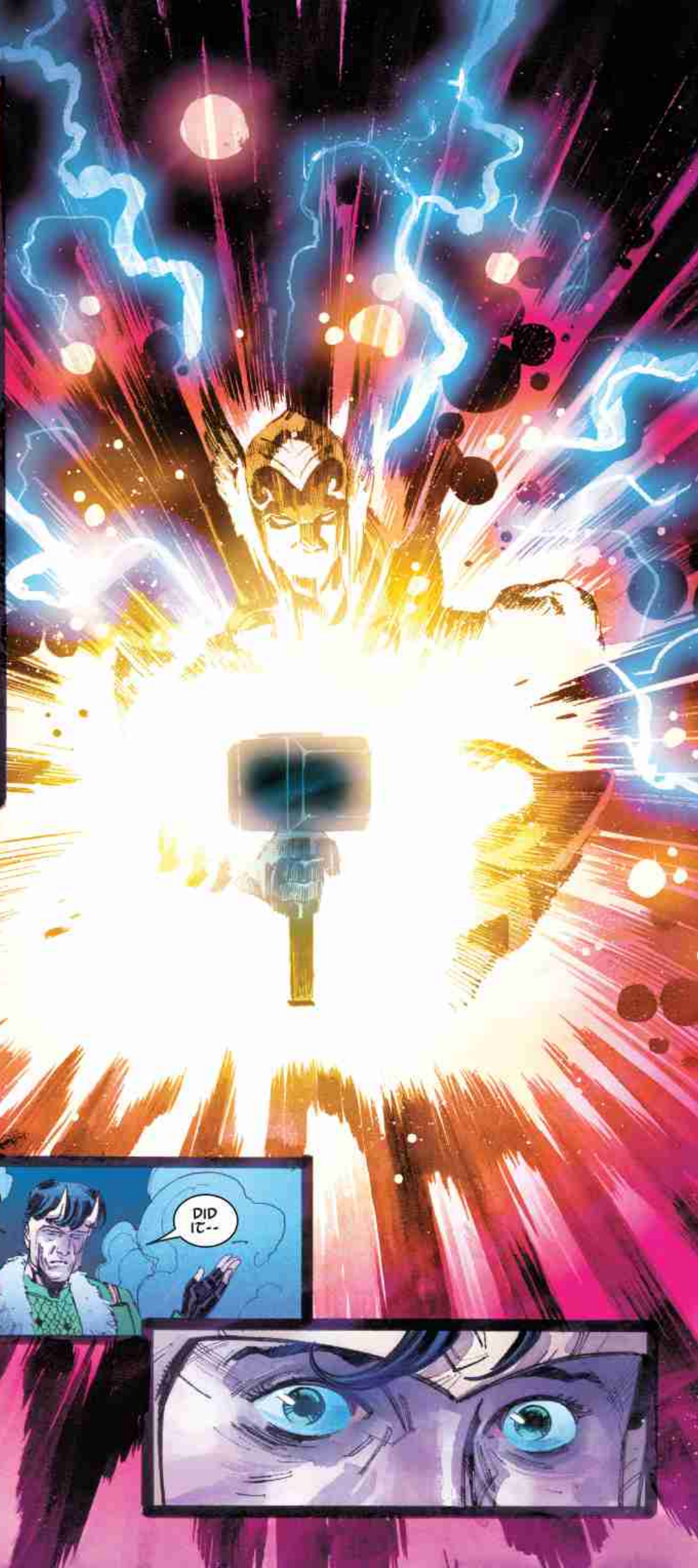
AND BESIDES...

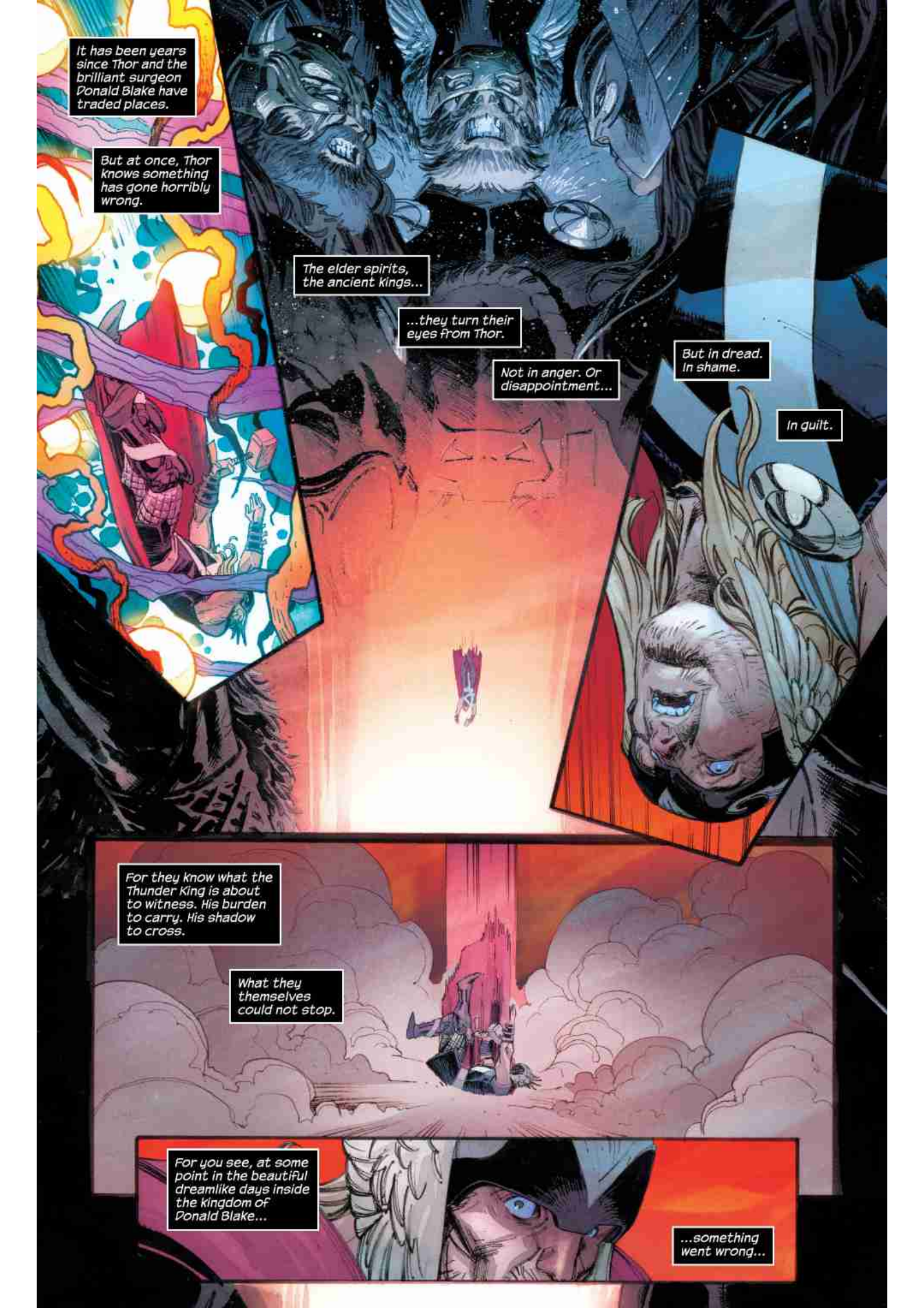
YOU WILL OWE ME ONE RATHER ABSURDLY LARGE FAVOR THAT I LOOK FORWARD TO YOU REGRETTING IN THE FUTURE.



THANK YOU, BROTHER.

AGHHH!!





It has been years
since Thor and the
brilliant surgeon
Donald Blake have
traded places.

But at once, Thor
knows something
has gone horribly
wrong.

The elder spirits,
the ancient kings...

...they turn their
eyes from Thor.

Not in anger. Or
disappointment...

But in dread.
In shame.

In guilt.

For they know what the
Thunder King is about
to witness. His burden
to carry. His shadow
to cross.

What they
themselves
could not stop.

For you see, at some
point in the beautiful
dreamlike days inside
the kingdom of
Donald Blake...

...something
went wrong...

...and the surgeon
woke up.

And has since gone
rather majestically
insane.





With Odin's magic preventing his knowing how many endless hours, days, weeks and even years he's spent broken...



...Donald Blake looked to the sky and screamed for his hero.

For his sun to save him from his never-ending shadow.



And alas, the good doctor screamed and bellowed and prayed to his god as his mind shattered around him.



Thor, unaware, never responded...



And after many dissections and examinations...Donald Blake finally received his answers.

This place...it is not heaven...



...it is, and always
will be, a prison.

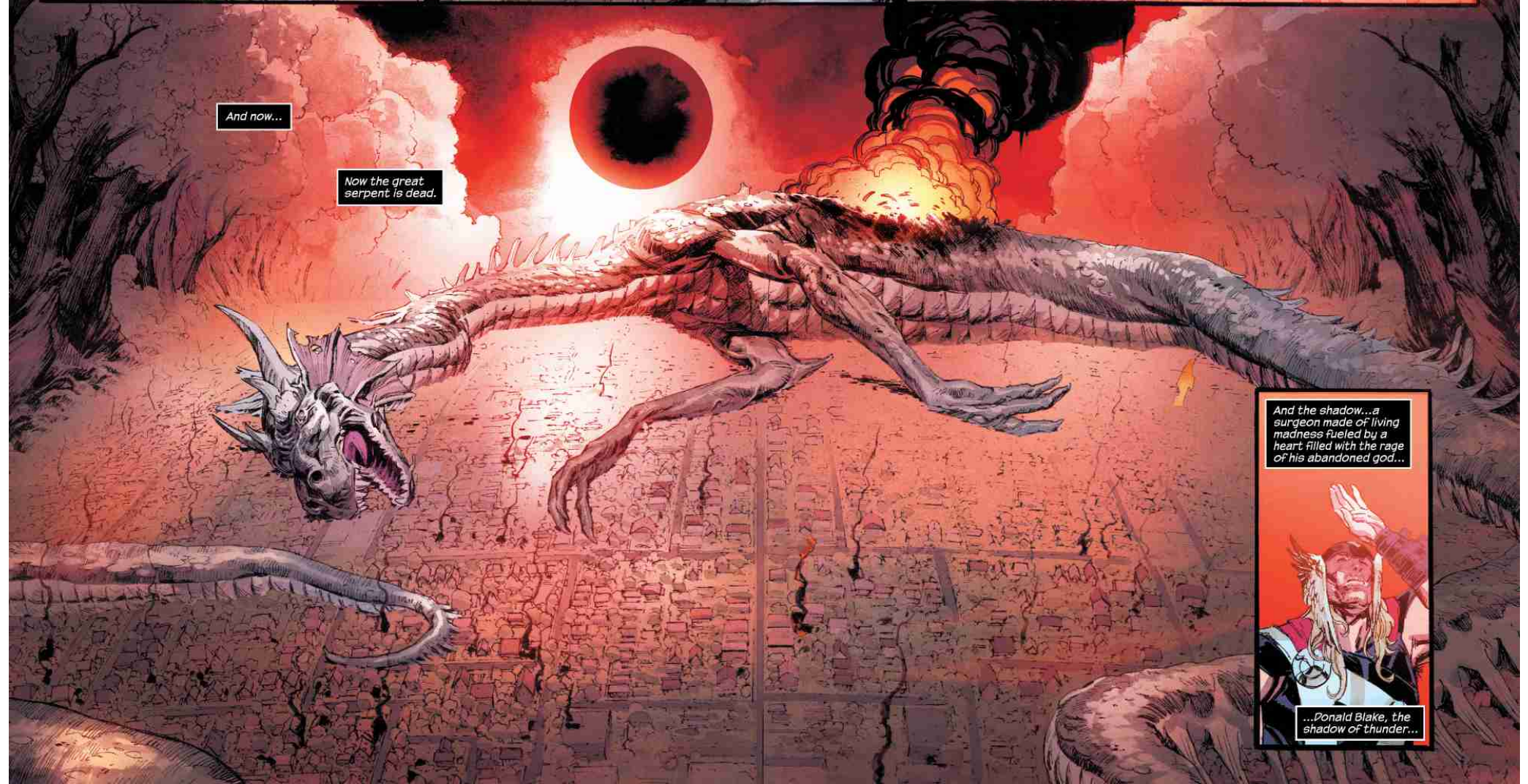


But now...now the
gates have been
unleashed...



The serpent got
to the bird.

The sun was
trapped by
the shadow...



And now...

Now the great
serpent is dead.



And the shadow...a
surgeon made of living
madness fueled by a
heart filled with the rage
of his abandoned god...

...Donald Blake, the
shadow of thunder...

...is free.







OH, LOKI...



...HOW GOOD IT IS TO SEE YOU AGAIN!

AGH!



ENOUGH! I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS IS OR HOW YOU GAINED THIS POWER.

ALLOW ME TO RE-INTRODUCE MYSELF. I AM--



BUT I AM LOKI ODINSON, KING OF JOTUNHEIM AND GOD OF STORIES AND MYTH. AND I WILL NOT BE BESTED BY A PRETEND THOR NAMED DONALD BLAKE!



DOCTOR.



MY NAME IS DOCTOR DONALD BLAKE.

AGH!!!



I AM NOT HIM. NOT YOUR NEW KING. YOUR NEW GOLDEN BIRD...

AND I WILL NEVER BE A REFUGE TO A GOD AGAIN...

FROM NOW ON, NONE OF THEM WILL HAVE A PLACE TO HIDE...FROM ME.



NO...

I AM NO THOR...

...AND I
NEVER WILL BE
AGAIN.



QUOTH THE RAVENS: THE HUGINN & MUNINN SHOW

WRITE TO US AT MHEROES@MARVEL.COM
AND MARK YOUR MISSIVES "OKAY TO PRINT."



Well, Huginn...we've seen some bloody days in Asgard, but this looks very, very bad.

Nobody asked the birds what to do. Even I could have told Thor to do some pecking about before he trades places with a man he hasn't seen in years.

Stay thine beak! We are but simple ravens. Now, let's see if we can get these prayers to our lord's ear...

Hi,

Just writing to say that I'm loving Donny Cates' run on THOR. He's been my favorite hero since I started reading Marvel comics 30 years ago, and the first arc was amazing! The vision he had was brilliant, and I liked the respect shown to Thor. Early days but I haven't been this excited since the days of JMS. Please more of the same!

Yours sincerely,
Jatinder
England

Thirty years! I would bet all my feathers that you remember the golden days of Donald Blake. 'Tis a different world now, surely...

Aye, heroes. I say thee, aye.

Sers and Sersis Cates, Kuder, Wilson, Sabino, Klein, Moss and Brunstad: For part the first of "Hammerfall" and for all the loving labor leading this latest launch of the mightiest title of them all, we loyal acolytes of the thunder tribe can only extend our sincerest thanks for delivering adventures imaginative, unexpected and true, especially in these days of ne'ending war, pestilence and strife.

'Tis a funny thing to swear by a fictive god's hammer. Still, studying monthly runes, conscribed in pen and digital ink made print, can yea be a ritual sacred as any.

Funnier still to recall our lord of the storm's modern birth—

summoned forth by a brilliant but battered artist, who knew true evil and villainy by sight and experience and who drew from the ashes of his vanquished enemies an iconic relic, cast him as blond and blue-eyed as they purported themselves to be and opened for a world of fanatics the cosmos of his mind, with a pair of verbose brothers setting his imagery to words.

Aye, 'tis a deep and true magik to craft so powerful and everlasting a weapon. It really hammers your point home.

Though by now there are entire corps of those who have lifted the magical tool that propels our heroic Odinson, most remarkable is how each distinguishes themselves through unique testaments to both their humanity and indeed the godliness of all who draw breath, whether they walk with cane or no. These kith and kin, worthy all, are leaders—in the magiks of storytelling, surely, but just as surely in the power cosmic of inspiration.

With these seven latest entries of our saga, wordsmith Cates, sages Moss and Brunstad, letterman Sabino and rainbow-shaping masters Kuder, Klein and Wilson have by now all inscribed their surnames into the stars. Gods have ascended, fallen, broken one another and broken bread in conciliation. Resplendent outfitted armors, expressions of anguish and resilience and, most of all, new ideas drawn from cherished elder ones have made this as worthy a reading experience as one could hope for, in a world that demands both attention and escape.

We of the thunder tribe need such efforts, wherein we can find ourselves a morsel of peace, of promise. Aye, 'tis no easy thing to cast each of our hammers in the direction of our needing and wait with open palms until their return. Like Asgard's new king, we may indeed dream of terrors

untold in our infinite tomorrows, but it is the day in our hands that needs our efforts and attentions. While the realm eternal may animate our minds, it is Gaea's good earth we feel beneath our feet, where we know we will tread until we become the tread. I, for one, find solace in the all-knowing that as long as these marvelous runes can be counted upon for their lunar deliveries, I myself will have it in me to lift Mjolnir each month, 22 pages of story at a time.

To Adam Aziz then. Seeing our latest immortal everyman rise, hammer in hand, calls to mind the hero who first taught me how feet of clay led to feats of heroism, Eric Masterson. The fallen Thunderstrike, summoned to life by the masterful DeFalco/Frenz alliance and motivated by his son and successor, Kevin, taught me much in his short life about the value and resilience of artful expression, about the majesty of determination in the face of the seemingly impossible, about the fickle nature of fashion, about the meaning of "Hoo boy!"

All my life, he was mine: my hero, my avatar, my secret favorite band. So today, to see a new hero rise, born of duty and circumstance and good humor, to see the meticulous craftwork of Aaron Kuder's designs and magnificent tattoos, to sense the steady, Odinish storytelling command of Donny Cates, to know much and little of what has happened and what might yet come next with our new "Adam Thor," it felt...well, it felt like lightning in the palm, a sweated grip of a trusty mallet, a charm cast and made true, by pure will and creative conviction alone. It was good.

And so, when reaching the final page of Thor's latest chapter and in seeing that ravens were once more delivering missives to where yon hammer strikes, Brendan, of the Cambridge McGuirks, thought it worthwhile to make manifest my gratitude,

admiration and heart of Uru. A silly thing, no doubt—a vanity, to presume the attention of the gods. Still, ours carries a hammer, and of its many powers, none exceed its ability to bridge worlds.

Many thanks,
Brendan McGuirk

P.S. Sorry to be so thunderously extra, but you guys asked for it!!! ;)

A worthy letter indeed! Are you sure you're from Midgard, Brendan? Such eloquence from a mortal shames my raven's tongue!

Hello, fellow Asgardians,

Thor is one of my favorite Marvel heroes ever. I have not had this much fun reading a THOR series in years! Thank you, Donny, it's so amazing to have a writer who really understands the character and gives him a fantastic story. Who came up with the idea for the "Call Tony" phone number? That was GENIUS. I also wanted to give a big shout-out to Aaron and Matt for the gorgeous scenery of Asgard. I could stare at it for hours. Can't wait for the next issue!

Frank K.

Aye, Tony Stark's voicemail was the suggestion of one humble bird, ever on the lookout for ways to increase my lord's—

Huginn. You don't even know how to use a phone.

Bah! That's because birds are a far superior method of communication. Fine, fine. Asgard's own scribe Donny Cates is responsible for that clever trick, if you must know. But can a voicemail breach other dimensions? I think not.

Hello Muninn, Huginn and the THOR team!

First off, FANTASTIC work so far! Every issue, pardon the puns,

is glittering from the lightning magic words of Mr. Cates and the dramatic thunderous illustrations of Klein, Wilson and Kuder. And I'd be remiss to leave out the absolutely gorgeous letterer, Mr. Sabino!

Every single one of you have brought your A-game to this title, and it's been showing in the Black Winter's speech bubbles, to the new character designs, massive cosmic action shots and, again, the beautifully poetic scripting of Cates. This has made it feel like a classic Lee/Kirby tale from back in the day—tons of collaboration and creativity being poured out in heavy doses. I am incredibly

excited to see where you plan to take us! Stay safe out there.

Andrew Carlson
Bellingham, WA

Andrew, your sweet words lift my wings.

Thank you all, noble scribes! All-Father Thor may be trapped in another world, but keep sending us your prayers, and we shall endeavor to deliver them most expediently.

If we survive another 30 days, Muninn. That's a big IF. Just look at what's coming...

NEXT ISSUE:



